I. Habits of Mind

Habits of mind—ways of approaching learning that are both intellectual and practical—are crucial for all college-level learners. Beyond knowing particular facts or completing mandatory readings, students who develop these habits of mind approach learning from an active stance. These habits help students succeed in a variety of fields and disciplines. They are cultivated both inside and outside school. Teachers can do much to develop activities and assignments that foster the kind of thinking that lies behind these habits and prepare students for the learning they will experience in college and beyond.
These habits include:

1. Curiosity – *the desire to know more about the world.*

Curiosity is fostered when writers are encouraged to

• use inquiry as a process to develop questions relevant for authentic audiences within a

variety of disciplines;

• seek relevant authoritative information and recognize the meaning and value of that

information;

• conduct research using methods for investigating questions appropriate to the

discipline; and

• communicate their findings in writing to multiple audiences inside and outside school

using discipline-appropriate conventions.

2. Openness – *the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.*

Openness is fostered when writers are encouraged to

• examine their own perspectives to find connections with the perspectives of others;

• practice different ways of gathering, investigating, developing, and presenting

information; and

• listen to and reflect on the ideas and responses of others—both peers and

instructors—to their writing.

3. Engagement – *a sense of investment and involvement in learning.*

Engagement is fostered when writers are encouraged to

• make connections between their own ideas and those of others;

• find meanings new to them or build on existing meanings as a result of new

connections; and

• act upon the new knowledge that they have discovered.

4. Creativity – *the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas.*

Creativity is fostered when writers are encouraged to

• take risks by exploring questions, topics, and ideas that are new to them;

• use methods that are new to them to investigate questions, topics, and ideas;

• represent what they have learned in a variety of ways; and

• evaluate the effects or consequences of their creative choices.

5. Persistence – *the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects.*

Persistence is fostered when writers are encouraged to

• commit to exploring, in writing, a topic, idea, or demanding task;

• grapple with challenging ideas, texts, processes, or projects;

• follow through, over time, to complete tasks, processes, or projects; and

• consistently take advantage of in-class (peer and instructor responses) and out-of-class

(writing or learning center support) opportunities to improve and refine their work.

6. Responsibility – *the ability to take ownership of one's actions and understand the consequences*

of those actions for oneself and others.

Responsibility is fostered when writers are encouraged to

• recognize their own role in learning;

• act on the understanding that learning is shared among the writer and others—students,

instructors, and the institution, as well as those engaged in the questions and/or fields in

which the writer is interested; and

• engage and incorporate the ideas of others, giving credit to those ideas by using appropriate

attribution.

7. Flexibility – *the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands*.

Flexibility is fostered when writers are encouraged to

• approach writing assignments in multiple ways, depending on the task and the writer's

purpose and audience;

• recognize that conventions (such as formal and informal rules of content, organization,

style, evidence, citation, mechanics, usage, register, and dialect) are dependent on discipline

and context; and

• reflect on the choices they make in light of context, purpose, and audience.

8. Metacognition – *the ability to reflect on one's own thinking as well as on the individual and*

cultural processes and systems used to structure knowledge.

Metacognition is fostered when writers are encouraged to

• examine processes they use to think and write in a variety of disciplines and contexts;

• reflect on the texts that they have produced in a variety of contexts;

• connect choices they have made in texts to audiences and purposes for which texts are

intended; and

• use what they learn from reflections on one writing project to improve writing on

subsequent projects.

II. Developing Rhetorical Knowledge

Rhetorical knowledge is the ability to analyze and act on understandings of audiences, purposes, and contexts in creating and comprehending texts. Rhetorical knowledge is the basis of good writing. By developing rhetorical knowledge, writers can adapt to different purposes, audiences, and contexts. Study of and practice with basic rhetorical concepts such as purpose, audience, context, and conventions are important as writers learn to compose a variety of texts for different disciplines and purposes. For example, a writer might draft one version of a text with one audience in mind, then revise the text to meet the needs and expectations of a different audience. Teachers can help writers develop rhetorical knowledge by providing opportunities and guidance for students to:

• learn and practice key rhetorical concepts such as audience, purpose, context, and genre through writing and analysis of a variety of types of texts (nonfiction, informational, imaginative, printed, visual, spatial, auditory, and otherwise);

• write and analyze a variety of types of texts to identify the audiences and purposes for which they are intended, the key choices of content, organization, evidence, and language use made by their author(s), the relationships among these key choices and the ways that the text(s) appeal or speak to different audiences;

• write for different audiences, purposes, and contexts;

• write for real audiences and purposes, and analyze a writer's choices in light of those

audiences and purposes; and

• contribute, through writing, their own ideas and opinions about a topic to an ongoing

conversation.